

Creating an Organisational Culture Conducive to the Achievement of SDG5 in South African Municipalities

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OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada.

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online) www.oidaijsd.com

Also available at <https://www.ssm.com/index.cfm/en/oida-intl-journal-sustainable-dev/>

Abstract: Equality was introduced to South Africa in 1994 with the first democratic election. However, almost 30 years later, South African municipalities are still struggling to attain gender equality despite numerous laws, regulations, and frameworks. The challenges hindering gender equality are cemented in the patriarchal culture of many societies, in this study the focus is on South African society, which has a significant impact on the workplace. The objective of the research was “to offer practical actions that are required by the South African municipalities to effectively implement gender equality”. The qualitative research method was used with data collected through an analysis of relevant literature and documents. Information was analysed with conceptual analysis. The research resulted in a Framework for Gender Equality in South African Municipalities (GEFSAM). The essence of the framework is found in the changes required in municipal workplaces to achieve gender equality. This article focuses on the process required to address the organisational culture of municipalities with the purpose to create organisational cultures that are conducive to the achievement of sustainable development goal 5 (SDG5).

Keywords: Gender equality, sustainable development goals, organisational culture.

Introduction

It has been acknowledged that gender equality is a basic human right (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] 2005:2). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights established the legal concept of gender equality in 1948, and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women established it in 1979 (Jansen & Vyas-Doorgapersad 2023:1979). The significance of gender equality is further highlighted by the inclusion thereof in the sustainable development goals. Gender equality can boost economic growth in society and increase worker satisfaction at work. Therefore, it is undeniably important for achieving sustainable development goals. The sustainable development goals were developed in 2015 with the goal to eradicate poverty, hunger and climate change. Sustainable development goal number 5 addresses gender equality on levels in society and affects all other goals.

Thorpe (1990:1361) characterised gender discrimination as an unavoidable evil that has an impact on the environment at work. Lewis (2019:13) describes how hostile work conditions for middle-class and professional women still exist over thirty years later. All the obstacles to gender equality stem from the patriarchal structure of South African society. To break down the negative impact of the patriarchal society, it will be necessary to focus on the empowerment and role of men in the achievement of gender equality. Empowerment of men should focus on accepting the reality of gender inequality and the will to break down the barriers causing inequality (Jansen 2025:55).

The Gender Equality Framework for South African Municipalities (GEFSAM) provides a practical framework for granting equal decision-making powers, which is essential for the successful implementation of the framework and ultimately leads to gender equality where the strengths and values of both genders can be celebrated (Jansen 2025:55). The GEFSAM is a triple-tier approach with the first tier involving the acknowledgement of the interrelatedness of factors hampering gender equality; the second tier providing steps to be followed to address these factors to create an organizational culture that promotes gender equality and the final tier providing a practical implementation framework for GEFSAM. The second tier, focusing on steps to create an organisational culture conducive to gender equality, will form the basis of this article.

The article will commence with a short description of the research methodology used where the role of gender equality in the sustainable development goals will be discussed with the focus on sustainable development goal number 5 (SDG5) relating to gender equality. This will be followed by analysing the current state of gender equality in South African Municipalities. The results and discussion of the research with emphasis on the steps to be taken to create a culture conducive to gender equality will be analysed in detail.

Research Methodology

The study utilised qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory and a valuable form of inquiry. Qualitative research underlines the socially constructed nature of reality as a point of departure (Bauwens, Kennes & Bauwens 2013:1) while acknowledging the situational limitations that influence their inquiry. Inductive and deductive reasoning were adopted. The key difference between deductive and inductive reasoning is that an inductive approach is concerned with generating new theory while a deductive approach seeks to test a theory (Nhlapo 2020:23). Bhattacharjee (2012:4), adapted by Nhlapo (2020:23) posits that both inductive and deductive research is important in advancing science. Researchers navigate between constructing the conversation and examining the evidence and therefore use both inductive and deductive reasoning.

Data for the research was collected through an analysis of relevant literature and documents. Kabir (2016:202) regards data collection as one of the most important stages which allows you to gain insights and knowledge into your research problem. May (1997:4) states that successful research depends on a well-planned review of the available literature which allows the researcher to determine what is known and not known about the research problem. The study used secondary data that was collected from available literature. Information that has already been interpreted and documented is known as secondary data, thus it's critical to make sure that it is appropriately evaluated by examining the information's quality, the arguments' plausibility, and the author's standing (Walliman 2011:71-72). A good research technique to find bias and errors is to compare the data from different sources (Walliman 2011:72). The textual data was used and to mitigate the internal bias, diverse sources of information were considered to compile information. Document reviews used for research purposes assist with the discovery and determination of successful approaches to resolving any challenges or issues (Rice & Thornton 2019:1).

The qualitative information obtained with literature and documentary reviews and analysed through conceptual analysis. Nhlapo (2020, cited in Makhubu 2021:10) describes conceptual analysis as a technique that treats concepts as classes of objects, events, properties, or relationships. According to conceptual analysis, a concept's meaning must be precisely defined by determining and outlining the criteria used to categorise the phenomenon. Correctly defining the relevance of an explicit idea by identifying and specifying the circumstances under which it could be classed is the process of conceptual analysis, which involves dealing with concepts as categories of connections, objects, assets, and procedures (Furner 2004:233).

Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals

Following the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report, the phrase 'sustainable development' gained popularity in literature (Reddock 2000:32). Sustainable development is development that satisfies current needs without jeopardising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs, according to the report (United Nations [UN] 1987: par 27). Though feminist activists have traditionally viewed sustainable development as a component of a broader alternative paradigm of societal transformation, discussions surrounding sustainable development have primarily taken place within the framework of development economics (Reddock 2000:32).

Constructed in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprise 17 objectives that, if fulfilled, will eradicate poverty, hunger, and climate change worldwide (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2015:3). Osborn, Cutter and Ulla (2015:2) describe the SDGs as a shared global vision for development and a safe, unbiased, and sustainable universe for all human beings to flourish. The SDGs are founded on the ethical principles that nobody should remain behind, and everybody has a mutual obligation to contribute to achieving the global vision – the goals are therefore seen as both ambitious and challenging for all nations (Osborn et al. 2015:2).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are the focus of SDG 5 (UNDP 2015:8). Sustainable growth and the realisation of human potential are impossible if half of humankind is still deprived of its full range of possibilities and human rights. Equal opportunities for employment, leadership, and decision-making at all levels must be provided to women and girls, as well as equal access to high-quality education, financial resources, and political engagement. SDG 5 compelled world leaders to strive for a substantial rise in funding to reduce the gender gap and

bolster backing for organisations related to gender equality and women's empowerment on a national, regional, and worldwide scale (UN 2015:20).

The African Union's Agenda 2063 strategy framework for socioeconomic growth in Africa and the domestication and mainstreaming of the SDGs were the topics of a regional meeting held in 2016 by the UN Women's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) (UN Women 2017:1). The gathering offered a forum for exchanging expertise in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), discussing how to operationalize the GEWE agenda in a way that is mutually beneficial to both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, and determining how to expedite GEWE responsibility within the development frameworks. Effective GEWE promotion strategies were found in the various developmental frameworks, along with the inadequacies and difficulties in promoting GEWE accountability (UN Women 2017:2). As a result, governments and civil society are stepping up efforts to guarantee women's leadership and involvement in local government politics. The SDGs must be addressed both nationally and locally. This is consistent with one of the principles stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is that every individual has the right to participate in their nation's governance (Nyiransabimana 2018:2). SDG 5 calls for the advancement of political status and gender-based representation at the levels of decision-making.

Nine explicit targets have been set to eradicate gender inequality and promote women's empowerment to achieve SDG 5 (UN 2015:20). The first target refers to eradicating discrimination against women and girls globally. The second, third, and sixth targets refer to the elimination of gender-based violence, the elimination of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, and access to reproductive health rights, respectively (UN 2015:20). The fourth target stipulates that unpaid care and domestic work should be recognised, and household responsibilities should be shared within the household, implying that men should assist their female family members with unpaid care and domestic work (UN 2015:20). The fifth target is the first and only target that refers directly to the workplace and ensuring women's participation and opportunities for leadership. Although this target has direct implications for the workplace, it includes opportunities for participation in all levels of decision-making in public, economic and political life (UN 2015:20). The seventh target requires reforms to be implemented to provide women with equal rights to economic resources including property and financial services (UN 2015:20). The eighth target aims to promote women's empowerment by increasing their utilization of information and communication technology (UN 2015:20). The final target requires policies and legislation to be adopted and implemented for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (UN 2015:20). The 2018 Sustainable Development Goals Report (UN 2018:6) confirms that although certain forms of discrimination against females are diminishing, women are still being held back and deprived of basic rights and opportunities. Challenges identified in the SDG Report include physical and sexual violence, child marriages, genital mutilation, unpaid domestic and care work, and lack of representation in the national parliament (UN 2018:6). Gender inequality not only affects SDG 5 but also influences the achievement of other SDGs. The interlinkages of SDG 5 with Agenda 2030 must be understood.

Gender Equality in South African Municipalities

Women make up half of the working-age population worldwide, and if they are equally represented in state administration, a nation's workforce, capability, and innovation will reach their full potential, resulting in a more robust, sustainable, and gender-equal society (UN 2017: 8-9) ultimately resulting in a more responsive and effective government (UNDP 2014:8). The responsibility for implementing policies and programmes to deliver on national commitments lies with local government (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2017:105) and advancing gender equality is an integral part of this mandate, as affirmed by a significant amount of local government legislation (South African Local Government Association [SALGA] 2017:7).

Local government is the closest and most accessible level of government to women (IULA 1998 in Beall 2005:8). Women must be represented in senior decision-making positions, not only to obtain equity, but also to provide a female perspective to discussions and policies (UNDP 2014:7). The importance of women in local government cannot be over-emphasised because through this participation, decision-making is influenced to create a gender-sensitive environment that supports women's empowerment (Govender & Vyas-Doorgapersad 2013:106).

South African municipalities are legislatively prohibited from segregating occupations based on gender and are also required to actively promote gender equality. The Department of Labour is responsible for the monitoring of gender equality in all South African organizations, including local government. Monitoring is achieved with the annual submission of Employment Equity Reports (EERs). There are 257 metropolitan, district and local municipalities in South Africa (www.gov.za) who are required to submit EERs. The first challenge identified with the lack of implementation of legislation is the low submission rate by municipalities. During the 2023/2024 reporting period, only 186 EERs were received (Commission for Employment Equity [CEE] 2024:15) which indicates a 72%

submission rate. The lack of submitting legislative reports indicates the lack of commitment in South African Municipalities to promote and ensure equality in the workplace. Table 1 (CEE 2024:89) provides a breakdown of the workforce profile in South African Municipalities based on gender which clearly indicate the insufficient representation of women on decision-making levels. Women represent only 30.8% of top management positions and 35.2% of senior management positions.

Table 1: Local Government Workforce Profile for All Employees in terms of Gender

Local Government	Male				Female				Foreign National		TOTAL
	African	Coloured	Indian	White	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female	
Top Management	450	89	25	58	200	35	9	32	0	0	898
	50.1%	9.9%	2.8%	6.5%	22.3%	3.9%	1.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Senior Management	1694	179	130	261	981	58	66	121	8	3	3501
	48.4%	5.1%	3.7%	7.5%	28.0%	1.7%	1.9%	3.5%	0.2%	0.1%	100.0%
Professionally qualified	5424	1332	308	1353	4317	827	201	719	66	33	14580
	37.2%	9.1%	2.1%	9.3%	29.6%	5.7%	1.4%	4.9%	0.5%	0.2%	100.0%
Skilled Semi-skilled	19900	5533	1519	2935	17229	3466	718	1681	33	16	53030
	37.5%	10.4%	2.9%	5.5%	32.5%	6.5%	1.4%	3.2%	0.1%	0.0%	100.0%
	30438	8245	1101	973	23124	5183	724	1258	10	4	71060
	42.8%	11.6%	1.5%	1.4%	32.5%	7.3%	1.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Unskilled	29908	5628	292	231	18525	2405	105	79	9	3	57185
	52.3%	9.8%	0.5%	0.4%	32.4%	4.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
TOTAL PERMANENT	87814	21006	3375	5811	64376	11974	1823	3890	126	59	200254
	43.9%	10.5%	1.7%	2.9%	32.1%	6.0%	0.9%	1.9%	0.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Temporary employees	7188	744	16	114	11641	588	21	74	0	1	20387
	35.3%	3.6%	0.1%	0.6%	57.1%	2.9%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
GRAND TOTAL	95002	21750	3391	5925	76017	12562	1844	3964	126	60	220641

Source: Commission for Employment Equity (CEE 2024:89)

The factors hampering the implementation of gender equality in local government were classified into five categories. Ideological factors refer to the beliefs and perceptions that encourage gender inequality (Hunt 1987 as in See 2018:39). Social factors include cultural perspectives, norms and stereotypes against women. The ideological and social factors form the patriarchal society in South Africa. Rawat (2014:43-44) describes patriarchy as a social and ideological paradigm which regards men as superior to women, resulting in the disempowerment of women at the cultural, social, economic, and political levels. Institutional factors in local government pertain to the processes involved in establishing a gender-responsive local governance within the developmental role of local government. Economic factors refer to equal pay for equal work as well as access to employment. No evidence could be found regarding discrimination in work-related responsibilities, and it is acknowledged that equal pay for equal work is implemented in local government. However, female workers experience an average gender wage gap of approximately 30% less than their male counterparts. This disparity can be attributed to males having a higher likelihood of being employed in better-paying jobs and occupying more favourable positions in local government (Gaventa & Runciman 2016:70). Political factors include majority male representation in political parties, corruption during election processes, and a lack of transparency and accountability in municipal affairs and budgets. These factors have led to the deterioration of gender equality in local government, and political parties lack the ambition and political will to address these challenges.

Results and Discussion

The research findings can be summarised as follows:

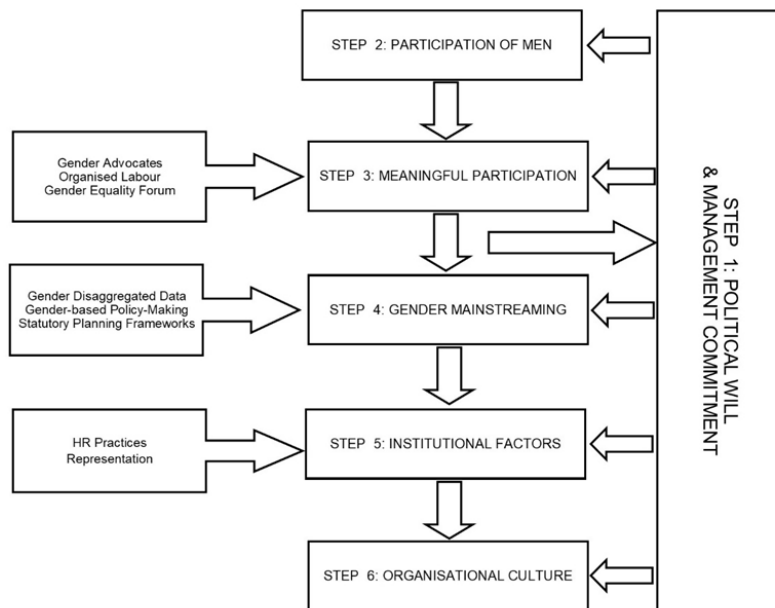
- The lack of gender equality is evident at all levels in municipalities, including the political, policy, organisational, departmental, individual, and stakeholder levels.
- Ideological factors form the foundation of gender inequality and their impact on the workplace cannot be over-emphasised. It can be said that gender equality or inequality in the workplace begins at home. Patriarchal societies have a significant impact on the workplace in local government. As an employer, municipalities cannot control the creation or implementation of a culture that occurs at home. The employer can only focus on employees while they are within the boundaries of the workplace.
- In the workplace, the lack of women's representation in strategic positions is undeniable in the creation of gender inequality. With the negative influence of ideological factors, gender equality can only be achieved if matters regarding gender are influenced by both males and females. Women cannot be represented solely by men. It is, therefore, important to ensure equal representation by both genders at all levels of a municipality.
- Males and females are physiologically different. The ultimate goal of gender equality is not to create one mould for males and females but rather to celebrate the differences while creating a workplace suitable for both genders. By celebrating gender differences, the workplace can be adapted to promote equality rather than favouring only one gender – a workplace that will benefit from the strengths of both genders and mitigate their weaknesses.
- There is no need to “empower” female employees to become managers. The focus needs to shift away from empowering females to concentrate on the empowerment of males. Minimising the elements of masculine workplaces in local government requires empowering males to accept females in the workplace and promote gender equity.
- The obvious absence of gender mainstreaming in local government should be addressed.
- Legislation and policy documents are well-written and abundant in South Africa and the local government environment. However, there is a lack of consequence management for non-adherence to their implementation.

The research proposes a Gender Equality Framework for South African Municipalities (GEFSAM) to initiate a paradigm shift that will allow municipalities to move away from mere legal compliance towards a workplace culture where gender differences are recognised and celebrated. The GEFSAM is a triple-tier approach where the first tier requires the identification and acknowledgement of factors hampering gender equality. The second tier focus on the creation of an organisational culture that promotes gender equality with the third tier providing a practical implementation framework. The three tiers are discussed and explored in the study. This article will focus on the second tier where the creation of an organizational culture conducive to gender equality forms the core of the GEFSAM.

Organisational Culture Conducive to Gender Equality

Complying with legislation such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1995 does not mean that an organization have create a conducive environment for gender transformation – organisations need to understand that gender transformation occurs with a changing organizational culture, policies and ways of working (Ngcobo 2018:3). Organizational culture consists of the beliefs and expectations shared by members of an organization where the type of culture is defined by the common norms, values and perspectives of the individuals in the group – the collective outlook, assumptions, and standards that shape the organisation's identity (Chalmers, Marras & Brannan 2025). South African municipalities within a patriarchal society conforms to an organizational culture based on these values. A workplace that inspires employees to work together, build relationships, promote career development, ensures fair remuneration and ensure employee safety is regarded as conducive or positive (Louw 2024:47).

The GEFSAM describes certain steps to address and mitigate the effect of the factors hampering gender equality leading to the creation of an organisational culture conducive to gender equality. Although the six steps are described separately, it forms a unit where each step can have an influence on the other steps. The steps and the interaction between the steps are visualized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Steps towards an Organisational Culture conducive to Gender Equality

Source: Primary researcher's own illustration

Step 1: Political Will and Management Commitment

The first step requires the creation of political will and management commitment to address the challenges that will be encountered on the journey to gender equality. Management commitment can be described as the “direct participation by the highest level of executives in a specific and critically important aspect or programme of an organisation” (Vaidyanathan 2009:17). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2024:9) defines political will as “the product of a complex array of incentives and disincentives created by largest political and bureaucratic processes” and includes commitment from a defined set of stakeholders; a common understanding of the problem on the agenda; the development of a collective approach; and the capacity to implement. In municipalities, where leadership is dominated by males, the lack of political will and management commitment will lead to the reinforcement of gender inequality. Political will in municipalities has been identified as the most significant obstacle to gender equality. Political will is an essential capacity for creating inclusive systems, structures, and decision-making processes. Male leaders need to advocate for gender equality, leading to the development of governance-changing policies that transform gender norms and shift power in favour of women. Political will and management commitment are critical as they impact the remainder of the process. Without ongoing political will and management commitment to succeed, the other steps will not be possible. Once GEFSAM has been agreed on in the municipality, the successful completion of the first step is required to enforce the framework's implementation and to establish systems of accountability.

Step one can be achieved with education of all stakeholders on specific gender training programmes; placing gender equality on the agenda of all established forums and council committees; and ensuring that a gender equality commitment charter is designed and accepted by all stakeholders. The successful implementation of step two and step three is dependent on the successful implementation of step one. It is therefore essential that the first step be repeated until the political will and management commitment for the achievement gender equality has been obtained and confirmed.

Step 2: Participation of Men

Changing an organisational culture requires the support of men, who constitute the majority of employees. Men hold power as they occupy the majority decision-making positions and therefore play a crucial role in the achievement of gender equality. Men need to be part of the solution by developing gender sensitivity to understand female perspective. Step 2 must ensure the active participation of men to shift the focus from placing the sole responsibility for change on women. Without their support for gender equality, implementing necessary changes becomes difficult. The success

of implementing this framework relies on men's involvement at political, top management, and senior management levels. The inclusion of males will increase the responsibility for driving change and decrease hostility and retaliation towards gender equity programmes (Flood 2015:5-6). Gender equity should be maintained when men are included in the process to ensure that the inclusion of men is not at the expense of women.

Step 3: Meaningful participation

The third step requires meaningful participation from both males and females. The success of participation is directly linked to the quality and character of communication (Deetz & Brown 2004:177). Communication should rest on the essential conceptions of freedom of speech, autonomy, persuasion and advocacy (Deetz & Brown 2004:178). Freedom of speech is non-negotiable and should be adequately available for equable participation in decision-making. Communication should be based on the expression of perceptions, thoughts, and feeling to ensure autonomy of individuals. Persuasion and advocacy must be the preferred mode of communication in cases of differences and conflict.

The lack of gender representation and the empowerment of both genders are significant contributors to gender inequality. Women lack the capacity to influence policy decisions, while men lack an understanding of the importance of effective implementation of gender policies. There is insufficient representation of women in the top and senior management levels in municipalities, resulting in a lack of female participation. The inclusion of females in decision-making structures is essential for meaningful participation. Once women are adequately represented in decision-making positions, they will have an impact on the appointment of more women in such positions, creating a virtuous circle that breaks the vicious cycle of women not supporting women. Due to the lack of gender equity, it will be necessary for municipalities to establish forums where gender advocates can be provided with opportunities of meaningful participation. Existing forums, such as the local labour forum and its subcommittees, portfolio committees, executive committee, and the municipal council, should also be utilised. Gender advocates participating in these committees should be capacitated to provide meaningful contributions. It is believed that "influencing those in positions of power and authority to take gender equality seriously is essential for progress" (Havet, Braun & Gocht 2007:19).

Steps one, two and three should be reviewed prior to moving to step four to ensure the successful creation of an organisational culture conducive to gender equality. It will be necessary to determine if political commitment was achieved; if management commitment was achieved; and if meaningful participation is taking place in the gender equality forums. If any of these aspects have not been achieved, it will be required to revert to step 1.

Step 4: Gender Mainstreaming

Step 4 requires gender mainstreaming in municipalities which involves the analysis of barriers and challenges to implement specific measures that will ensure equal access to rights and services (Hicks, Morna & Fonona 2016:11). Gender mainstreaming involves three distinct actions: compiling gender-disaggregated data, setting gender-based policies, and incorporating gender into statutory planning frameworks.

- **Compiling Gender Disaggregated Data:** When patterns of gender disparity and inequality are discovered in sex-disaggregated data, gender analysis is utilised to investigate the reasons for the disparities, assess their significance, and explore how they might be addressed (Department for International Development [DFID] 2002, in Havet et al. 2007:31).

- **Gender-based Policy Setting:** Policies in municipalities are not discriminatory, but municipalities in general lack policies designed to address gender inequality. Gender mainstreaming reinforces inclusive policymaking by adding a gender lens and tools for assessing the impact of policies on women and other under-represented groups and targets the determinants of gender inequity (Thomas et al. 2020:3). The potential of gender policies is significantly enhanced when they are developed through a participatory process involving key decision-makers (Havet et al. 2007:49). Such policies are more likely to succeed, gain widespread acceptance, and secure commitment for implementation (Havet et al. 2007:49).

- **Incorporating Gender into Statutory Planning Frameworks:** Gender mainstreaming necessitates the incorporation of a gender perspective into the planning, implementation, and monitoring processes of all legislation, policies, and programmes (Terkoglu, Ilkcaracan, Memis & Yucel 2017:31). Gender mainstreaming in all policies, plans, financial activities, and decision-making needs to be visible in municipalities to encourage women's participation (Ferreira 2018:32). Incorporating gender into statutory planning frameworks requires that all municipal planning documents acknowledge gender challenges and incorporate means to address such challenges. Statutory

planning frameworks include but are not limited to the integrated development plan, municipal budget, performance management framework, service delivery budget implementation plan, employment equity plan, workplace skills plan, and any human resource strategies.

Step 5: Institutional Factors

Step five requires addressing institutional factors and binds everything done thus far together. Institutional factors include management commitment, organizational culture, human resource practices, gender representation, care responsibilities, and female role models. Management commitment was addressed in the first step, while organisational culture was addressed in the sixth step. Human resource practices should be amended and adapted in terms of the policies developed and agreed upon during gender mainstreaming. Gender representation and care responsibilities are addressed automatically during the successful implementation of all policies, plans, procedures, and processes agreed upon.

Step 6: Organisational Culture

Step six is the last step towards the achievement of an organizational culture conducive to gender equality. An organizational culture cannot be changed by merely changing policies or issuing an edict (Mayowa 2013:182). People in positions of authority can demand compliance, but trust, conviction, and optimism cannot be dictated (Walker & Soule 2017:2). The culture of an organisation will influence its mission and strategy, as well as its structures, procedures, information flows, recruitment processes, staff evaluations, reward systems, openness to participation, conflict resolution methods, and opportunities for staff creativity (Havet et al. 2007:19). Workplace culture changes can only be achieved over a period of time and Pannuzzo (2019:1) is of the opinion that this process can take up to five years. Step six therefore requires commitment for the consistent implementation and application of all decisions, policies and practices agreed upon.

Conclusion

The plight against gender inequality has been recorded as early as 1405 and more than 600 years later, gender equality has not been achieved (Jansen 2025:71). The sustainable development goals were developed in 2015 with a global vision of a safe, unbiased and sustainable universe for all human beings. Achieving this global vision requires the implementation of SDG5 which is concerned with gender quality and empowering women and girls. Local government is the closest and most accessible level of government to the population and thus has an essential role and responsibility to ensure equality and equity. Since the acceptance of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996 and subsequent publication of legislation, local government is obliged to ensure equitable workplaces. However, the employment equity reports indicated a continuous lack of gender equality in municipalities. South African municipalities are formed and populated within a society found to be patriarchal in nature resulting in a patriarchal organisational culture.

The purpose of the article was to provide a practical guideline to address the organisational culture of South African municipalities and involve political will and management commitment; obtaining the participation of men; ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making structures; implementing gender mainstreaming; addressing institutional factors and managing cultural change.

The textual data for the study was compiled using multiple sources of information to mitigate internal bias. The information was assessed through conceptual analysis. The information reviewed and analysed was further summarised as key findings, stated under the section 'Results and Discussions'. The conclusion of findings resulted into the introduction of a GEFSAM framework that provides contribution to the fields of public management, gender studies and development studies. The conclusion drawn from secondary textual sources may assist policymakers to implement the proposed framework in their respective contexts to ensure gender equality (micro level) and hence a realisation of SDG 5 (macro level).

Note

The article is based on a completed unpublished PhD Thesis titled: Jansen, D. 2024. Factors influencing the implementation of gender equality in Newcastle Local Municipality at UJ under the supervision of Prof S Vyas-Doorgapersad. Unpublished Thesis. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

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